New Books.

The Learned Societies and Printing Clubs of the United Kingdom. By the Rev. A. Hume, LL.D. Longman & Co. 1847.

The purpose of this work is to give an account of the origin, history, objects and constitution of the various "learned societies," as they are politely termed, of England, Scotland, and Ireland, together with an account of the existing printing clubs. It is for the most part very correctly done, and will be found very useful for reference, especially by dwellers in the provinces.

In the introduction, the author makes a suggestion which deserves consideration, namely, the establishment of a central institution for the learned societies. "Did we possess a union, were it only of presidents and secretaries, for common objects, it could communicate, in forty-eight hours, with fifteen or sixteen thousand men, whose opinion would be entitled to a degree of substantial respect that it has never yet enjoyed."

Correspondence.

ARRANGEMENT OF RAILWAYS.

Sir,—As I perceive that you are fully alive to the necessity of *improvement* in the construction and management of our railways, allow me to say, one point which I think is very much neglected and which is the fruitful source of accidents, is the want of communications at the stations from the platforms on each side of the line, either by *bridges over* or by *tunnels under* it. The comparatively small expense at which this precaution could in most cases be carried out, renders it the more surprising that such a want should continue to exist.

A simple wooden bridge, with a flight of steps on both sides, would be all that is required for the purpose at most small country stations; of course in large towns a more substantial erection would be needed.

Another point in which I think railway companies have erred in the construction of *trunk lines*, where the traffic is likely to increase considerably, is their not having formed them of sufficient width to admit of a *third* line of rails being laid down. As a case in point, observe the railways which come to London bridge. They have been *widened twice*, and will, in all probability, be widened a third time. It is the natural consequence, which railway directors would readily see, if they would but look an inch before their noses, that as railways are continually being *extended by branches*, the traffic on the trunk line must necessarily increase, and it behoves them to make provision for it.

A third line also gives a great advantage in this way, that should one line require repairing, there would always be two in working order.

If thought well, one line might be set apart for luggage trains, and the other two for passenger trains; or, one line for express trains, and the other two for ordinary trains. The same short-sightedness is evident, also, with respect to railway terminuses and stations, which are *always* being altered and enlarged, and are in consequence always untidy and unfinished.

I would particularly urge upon the London and York Railway, now in course of formation, to take counsel by experience, and to form their road of a sufficient width for a third line of rails.—Yours, &c.

A Railway Traveller.

STONE LIFTERS.

Sir,—The lewis, sketched in your last number, is not a new form for the purpose. One on much the same principle was used, among other places, at the buildings of Orlingbury Church, Northants, in 1841. Mr. John Johnstone, the clerk of the works at that place, was the adapter. The one given by you has the disadvantage of the long bar bending inwards, through constant use; but the one which he used had not that objection. It had two long bars, one over another (passing through mortices in the cross pieces, having pin-holes at different distances to adjust to any thickness of stone), whereby, when at work, the lower one was subject to tension, and the upper one to pressure, doing away with the tendency in the bars to camber. It was used chiefly for raising ashlar. I merely write this for the benefit of your readers, and not to deprive Mr. Oliver of any credit which may attach to him for his application.

I am, Sir, &c., R.

Anne-street, Birmingham, July 19, 1847.

SHORT TIME ON SATURDAYS.

Sir,—Through the medium of your useful and widely-circulated paper, may I call the attention of the building trade to the peaceful movement now in progress amongst the carpenters and joiners of London, which is to obtain the privilege of leaving their work at four o'clock on Saturdays. I am encouraged to do this from the favourable notice you have taken of it in a former number of your Builder.

For some time past, an opinion has been gradually gaining ground, that many of the conflicting claims which arise between employers and their workmen might be satisfactorily arranged, if a good understanding existed between them: by this means the great inconvenience and loss sustained by the former, and the large amount of suffering endured by the latter, which are the inevitable results of strikes, would be avoided, and the position of both parties be materially improved.

With these views firmly impressed on the minds of the carpenters and joiners of the metropolis, they memorialized their employers; the most influential of whom, I am happy to say, have met their wishes in a corresponding good spirit. Mr. Thos. Cubitt, Mr. Wm. Cubitt, Mr. Baker, Mr. Kelk, Mr. Jackson, Mr. Piper, Messrs. Armstrong and Smith, Mr. Freak, Mr. Myers, Mr. Fitz-Patrick, Mr. Lee, and Mr. Seth Smith have already given the privilege.

To these gentlemen the trade must feel themselves gratefully obliged. This noble display of good feeling and disinterestedness will be productive of increased satisfaction, comfort, and good-will, on the side of their workmen; and serve as laudable example, worthy of imitation by other employers.

There can be no doubt but that the privilege in question will become general before long; that it may be so is the wish of

A Carpenter.

THE GEOMETRICAL SYSTEM OF THE MEDIÆVAL ARCHITECTS.*

Sir,—Having had my attention directed to an article "On the Geometrical System, applied by the Mediæval Architects to the Proportions of their Ecclesiastical Structures," by my very zealous friend, R. D. Chandrell, architect, inserted in pages 300—302 of your valuable journal, The Builder, wherein I am introduced as having explained to him certain ideas that probably influenced the architects of the middle ages, and a diagram is given explanatory of those ideas, I consider it but just, not only to myself, but to the public, to take this early opportunity of stating, that I intend shortly respectfully to solicit your permission to shew, by means of your journal, that neither the ideas which I am stated to entertain, nor the diagram given by Mr. Chantrell, are what constitute my supposed working principles of ecclesiastical architecture; but only disjointed scraps patched together, to shew that my mode of proceeding "cannot therefore be considered an universal system."—I am, Sir, &c. John Browne.

21, Blake-street, York, July 19, 1847.

Vandalism at Baalbeck.—From a private letter just received from a traveller, we receive the unwelcome intelligence that the magnificent Temple of the Sun at Baalbeck has been destroyed by order of the viceroy, for the sake of its fine stones, which are to be employed in erecting barracks for the cavalry and a forage magazine. Solyman Pasha so far saved the splendid gateway, as to cause the stones to be replaced in their original form in the construction of the entrance to the barracks. We lament to record such vandalism in the nineteenth century and in the land of the Pharaohs.—*Literary Gazette.*

* Mr. W. P. Griffith's work on this subject, to which we referred a few weeks since, is now before us, entitled "Ancient Gothic Churches, their Proportions and Chromatics. Published by the author, 8, St. John's-square, 1847." We shall take an early opportunity to examine it.

Miscellanea.

Britton Testimonial Club Dinners.—One of the most noticeable of these dinners was given last week by Mr. Gould, F.S.A., the treasurer, whereat Lieutenant Waghorn made a remarkable speech in respect of communication with India; and undertook to say that within seven years, the time for the transmission of letters would be shortened to fifteen days. He described the steam-apparatus which is now punching a passage through the Alps. Mr. Pettigrew gave some interesting particulars concerning the "mummy wheat," now to be found all over England; and Mr. Britton himself made a capital speech on the state of antiquarian knowledge. Mr. Crofton Croker, Mr. Cubitt, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Graham, Mr. Grissell, Mr. Gwilt, Dr. Roots, Mr. Wansey, Mr. Young, and others also spoke. At a following dinner, given by Mr. Gibbon, at Winchmore Hill, Captain Smyth, Director of the Society of Antiquaries, referred to his rescuing a sculptured marble from the hands of bricklayers at Alexandria, who were about to use it in forming a drain, and which has proved a curious link in tracing the history of Greek art. It is now at Stowe.

Ventilating Bricks.—Sir,—I would suggest that bricks may be made of the common size, but of somewhat better material, pierced through (their thickness) with holes one quarter of an inch *square*, and as much apart. It is not intended that the whole area of the brick should be pierced in the manner described, but only one half of it. By the ordinary mode of ventilating through openings in walls, there is nothing to prevent the cold air blowing directly into the room, but by these bricks it may be *driven downwards* before it can enter the inside of an apartment intended to be ventilated. The superior temperature of the air inside a room, will, in most cases, give it a sufficient ascending power to overcome the pressure of the colder air outside; and this effect will be increased in proportion to the length of the column of air passing through the *tube-like* perforations of the bricks, which may be placed one over the other, so as to produce a column of air of any height that may be found to give the best practical effect in producing thorough ventilation without a perceptible draught.—H. Liddell, Hull.

A Mammoth Monstrosity.—Conceive a huge structure, originally erected as a place of worship, converted into four strata of tenements, for the occupation of twenty families. Let there be no access to those tenements but by a covered passage-way, leading into a yard, or dry well, open to the sky, and overlooked by windows on every side. In this yard, so surrounded by tenements, and having no opening to the street but by the covered passage-way already mentioned, let all the privies of the twenty families be placed. Would not such a contrivance give birth to a monstrous nuisance? Inevitably it would. And yet, in this age of sanatory reform, a device of this kind has not only been contrived, but it is well-nigh executed, and may be seen within a stone's throw of a newspaper-office which shall be nameless.—*Gateshead Observer.*

Modern Vandalism.—The *Art-Union Journal* for July, gives a striking instance of the indifference of some moderns to that very art of wood-carving which in this country we are seeking to revive. The splendid altar-piece of St. Gudule's, at Brussels, designed by Rubens, has been sold to an Englishman to save the expense of regilding, and has passed through a London auctioneer's sale-room!

Dover Refuge Harbour.—We learn, from the *Canterbury Journal* that the Messrs Francis Freeman and Lee, of London, have taken the contract for carrying out the breakwater connected with this undertaking to the amount of 200,000*l.*, and that so soon as the necessary preliminaries—such as the signing of the contracts, &c.—are completed, this great national work will be immediately commenced.

The Decorative Art Society met at dinner on the evening of the 21st instant, as a mark of respect to Mr. Edward Cooper, one of their vice-presidents, who is about to leave England for some years. The chair was taken by Mr. L. Dennys, who addressed the company on the merits and prospects of the society, and other topics, with much taste and good feeling.

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